

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for monitoring browsing activity of a visitor to a Web site, comprising:
5 loading a client program into an operating environment of a client machine of a visitor to a Web site;
incrementing a reference count associated with the client program to maintain persistence of the client program in the operating environment during browsing by
10 the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site;
client browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages with the client program; and
15 uploading an indication of the browsing activity of the visitor over a network for processing.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising decrementing the reference count upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the client program from the
20 operating environment of the client machine.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.
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4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.
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5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises an Active X control.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein the reference count is incremented to a value greater than one.

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5 7. The method of Claim 6, further comprising:
decrementing the reference count to zero upon a
specified event; and
automatically unloading the client program from the
operating environment of the client machine upon a zero
10 reference count.

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10 8. A client-side program for monitoring the browsing activity of a visitor to a Web site, comprising:
a medium; and

5 logic encoded on the medium, the logic operable to run in an operating environment of a client machine of a visitor to a Web site, increment a reference count associated with the program to maintain persistence of the program during browsing activity of the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site, monitor browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages and upload an indication of the browsing activity over a network for processing.

15 9. The client-side program of Claim 8, the logic further operable to decrement the reference count upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the program from the operating environment of the client machine.

20 10. The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the logic comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.

25 11. The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the logic comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.

30 12. The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the program comprises an Active X control.

13. The client-side program of Claim 8, the logic operable to increment the reference count to a value greater than one.

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14. The client-side program of Claim 13, the logic further operable to decrement the reference count to zero upon a specified event and automatically unload the program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

15. A monitoring program for monitoring the activity of a visitor to a Web site from a client machine of the visitor, comprising:

means for incrementing a reference count associated
5 with the monitoring program to maintain persistence of the monitoring program in an operating environment of the client machine during browsing activity of the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site;

10 means for monitoring browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages with the monitoring program; and

means for uploading an indication of the browsing activity over a network for processing.

15 16. The monitoring program of Claim 15, further comprising means for decrementing the reference count upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the monitoring program from the operating environment of the client machine.

20 17. The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.

25 18. The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.

30 19. The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises an Active X control.

20. The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the reference count is incremented to a value greater than one.

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21. The monitoring program of Claim 15, further comprising:

means for decrementing the reference count to zero upon a specified event; and

means for automatically unloading the monitoring program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

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~~5~~ 22. A method for controlling the persistence of a component object model (COM) object downloaded over the Internet and loaded into an operating environment of a client machine, comprising:

~~incrementing an internal reference count of the COM object to a value greater than one to maintain persistence of the COM object in an operating environment of the client machine during browsing activity across a plurality of Web pages; and~~

~~decrementing the internal reference count to zero upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the COM object from the operating environment of the client machine.~~

~~15 23. The method of Claim 22, wherein the persistence of the COM object in the operating environment is maintained across a plurality of Web sites.~~

~~20 24. The method of Claim 22, wherein at least one of the Web pages is associated with a first Web site and at least one of the Web pages is associated with a second Web site distinct from the first Web site.~~